

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
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R 160847Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7665
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY SANA

S E C R E T JIDDA 2059

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SA, ET
SUBJ: SAUDI-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS AND THE HORN OF AFRICA

REF: JIDDA 1357

1. IN A MARCH 15 MEETING WITH DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER
ABDULRAHMAN AL MANSOURI THE AMBASSADOR RAISED THE QUESTION
OF SAUDI RELATIONS WITH ETHIOPIA AND POLICY TOWARDS ERITREA.
HE SAID THAT AS A RESULT OF CONSULTATIONS WE HAVE HAD WITH
THE SAG OVER A NUMBER OF YEARS WE HAD CONCLUDED THAT, IN
BARE OUTLINE, SAUDI POLICY TOWARDS ETHIOPIA WAS COMPOSED
OF THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS: (A) THE CONVICTION THAT THE
BREAKUP OF THE ETHIOPIAN STATE WOULD BE DESTABILIZING FOR
REGION. (B) SAUDI ASSISTANCE TO ERITREAN LIBERATION MOVE-
MENTS WHICH WAS LARGELY HUNAITARIAN AND DESIGNED TO LIMIT
THE INFLUENCE THERE OF RADICAL ELEMENTS. (C) SUPPORT FOR
A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE ERITREAN PROBLEM BASED ON AUTO-
NOMY OR FEDERATION FOR ERITREA WITHIN A UNITARY ETHIOPIAN

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STATE. THE AMBASSADOR INQUIRED WHETHER THIS WAS A FAIR
STATEMENT OF SAUDI POLICY AND WHETHER IT COULD STILL BE CONSIDERED
VALID.

2. MANSOURI REPLIED THAT THE POINTS THE AMBASSADOR HAD
ENUMERATED CONSTITUTED A REASONABLE CAPSULIZATION OF SAUDI
POLICY, THOUGH THE LAST ELEMENT, I.E. THE PREFERRED SAUDI

SOLUTION TO THE ERITREAN PROBLEM, HAD NEVER BEEN PUBLICLY ARTICULATED. HE SAID THAT THE SITUATION WAS NOW CHANGING AND THERE IS A TENDENCY FOR THE SAG TO GIVE INCREASING SUPPORT TO THE CONCEPT OF INDEPENDENCE FOR ERITREA. HE SAID THAT THIS TENDENCY WOULD BECOME MORE PRONOUNCED THE MORE THE SOVIETS APPEARED TO BE ENTRENCHING THEMSELVES IN ADDIS ABABA. MANSOURI SAID THAT IT IS NOT TOO LATE FOR A REVERSION OF SAUDI POLICY TO ITS PREVIOUS LINE, BUT THIS DEPENDS UPON THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE ADDIS REGIME KEEPS OUT OF THE COMMUNIST CAMP.

3. IN REPLY TO A QUESTION WHETHER THE SAG WAS COORDINATING ITS ETHIOPIAN POLICY WITH THE SUDANESE GOVERNMENT MANSOURI REPLIED IN THE NEGATIVE. HE SAID THAT THE SUDANESE HAD TAKEN A CONSIDERABLY MORE FORTHRIGHT POSITION THAN HAS THE SAG. THERE HAS BEEN NO FORMAL CONSULTATION TO DATE WITH SUDAN BUT THIS WILL OBVIOUSLY BE NECESSARY SOON.

4. MANSOURI SAID THAT THE SOMALIS WERE CLEARLY WORRIED BY THE GROWING BONDS BETWEEN THE ETHIOPIAN PROVISIONAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT AND THE SOVIETS. HE REITERATED (SEE REFTTEL) THAT THE SAUDIS WANTED TO KEEP THE SOVIETS FROM HAVING THEIR CAKE AND EATING IT TOO AND WILL ATTEMPT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITIES IN SOMALIA OFFERED BY THE SOVIET INTENT TO RIDE TWO HORSES AT THE SAME TIME.

5. COMMENT: SAUDI POLICY TOWARDS ETHIOPIA HAS BEEN QUITE STABLE SINCE BEFORE THE OVERTHROW OF THE EMPEROR. IT IS NOW CLEARLY UNDERGOING CHANGE AND AT AN ACCELERATING PACE
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AS THE ADDIS REGIME BECOMES MORE OUTSPOKENLY MARXIST AND AS THE EPMG'S ABILITY TO CONTROL THE SITUATION IN ERITREA AND THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY APPARENTLY DETERIORATES. THE SAUDIS ARE NOT ON VERY SURE GROUND IN THEIR DEALINGS WITH AFRICA. THEY WELCOME OUR CONSULTATION AND WOULD BE OPEN TO OUR ADVICE. IF WE ARE IN A POSITION TO TELL THEM ANYTHING ABOUT THE LIKELY RESULTS OF SUPPORT FOR ERITREAN INDEPENDENCE OR TO MAKE ANY FIRM RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS REGARD WE SHOULD DO IT NOW. IF WE DO NOTHING, THERE WILL BE A GROWING TREND TOWARDS SUPPORT FOR ERITREAN INDEPENDENCE AND A CORRESPONDING DETERIORATION IN RELATIONS WITH THE EPMG, POSSIBLY ACCOMPANIED BY SUPPORT TO THE EPMG'S OTHER ENEMIES SUCH AS THE ETHIOPIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION AND THE AFAR SUPPORTERS OF ALI MIRAH. IF THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN TELL THE SAUDIS NOW, WE SHOULD NONETHELESS BE PREPARED TO EXPLORE THE SUBJECT OF DEVELOPMENTS ON THE HORN OF AFRICA IN SOME DETAIL WITH CROWN PRINCE FAHD WHEN HE VISITS THE US.
PORTER

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